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SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERS DISCUSS SRI LANKA WITH  
NGOS AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE, FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On May 11, the UK and French Foreign Ministers hosted a meeting with like-minded Security Council members to discuss the situation in Sri Lanka. OCHA and four NGOs (Caritas, Save the Children, Oxfam and Human Rights Watch) also participated. The Austrian and Costa Rican Foreign Ministers also participated. UK Foreign Minister Miliband, in a concluding statement, said the like-minded Council members understood that the situation demanded action in the Security Council, and the UK would work towards this end. On the same day, the Secretary-General issued his strongest statement yet on the situation in Sri Lanka, saying "He reminds the parties that the world is watching events in Sri Lanka closely, and will not accept further violations of international law." Later, in a lunch with the Secretary-General, Council members discussed Sri Lanka, with Russia and China opposing any action. However, France will likely call for Council action this week, and will demand a product. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Foreign Minister Miliband opened the meeting by laying out the priorities for action in response to the plight of civilians caught up in the conflict in Sri Lanka. He stated that for the sake of the civilians trapped in the no-fire zone, the fighting must stop and they must be allowed to leave. For those civilians who have made their way to the transit camps in Vavuniya and Mannar, the government of Sri Lanka must develop a detailed resettlement plan.

¶3. (SBU) Andrew Cox, Under-Secretary-General John Holmes, chief of staff, began the substantive portion of the meeting with a summary of recent events. When asked for the UN,s reasoning of the use of the word "bloodbath" during an interview in Colombo, he noted that this was done because of the judgment that this was an accurate description of the last few days. Ambassador Rice asked for OCHA,s views regarding allegations that the government continued to use heavy weaponry. Cox replied that it was OCHA and the UN,s official judgment that both sides - LTTE and the government - continued to use heavy weapons. The Secretary-General released a strongly worded statement around the same time as the meeting in which he expressed deep concern at the continued use of heavy weapons. The statement continued, "The Secretary-General once again calls on both sides, in the strongest terms possible, to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law."

¶4. (SBU) Caritas supported OCHA,s summary of the events and said "the suffering has become unbearable." The Caritas representative underscored the problems of lack of access, a concern echoed by Save the Children, Oxfam and Human Rights Watch. Save the Children noted that it "takes weeks" to get from Colombo to the IDP camps, while Oxfam warned regarding the potential of gender violence in the camps. Save the Children noted that enough information on conditions in the

no fire zone exists to warrant action by the Security Council. If the members of the Security Council do not feel that enough information on the situation is available, then they should ask the government of Sri Lanka for access. Human Rights Watch said it had sent a letter to Japan asking it to convene an emergency meeting of the Security Council about the situation in Sri Lanka. The HR Watch representative said if the Security Council did not act, it would be seen as a "historic failure."

15. (SBU) Ambassador Rice thanked the NGOs for their work in extremely difficult conditions, and said the U.S. is focused on the homemade humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. She strongly supported efforts to improve the situation. Rice stressed the obligations of the government to respect international humanitarian law, and noted grave US concern regarding the situation in the conflict zone and in other camps. She told the NGO representatives that the U.S. would work to promote their access to the camps and all intermediate areas, and she reinforced calls for Security Council action. Other Council members - Mexico, Uganda, Croatia and Costa Rica - supported the calls of the UK and French Foreign Ministers to address this issue in the Security Council. Uganda and Mexico called for the UN to appoint a Special Envoy. Turkey and Japan were also present. They did not explicitly endorse Council action, and focused on the importance of consensus and a moderate approach. As in their statements to the Council, they focused primarily on the LTTE. Miliband concluded the meeting by thanking the NGOs for their work and acknowledging that they looked to the assembled countries for more than just words of support. He emphasized the UK's determination to address this issue in the Council.

16. (C) Later, the Secretary-General and Council members discussed Sri Lanka during their monthly lunch. The Foreign Ministers of the UK, France, Austria and Costa Rica, as well as the U.S. and Mexico all strongly supported SC action, with Russian FM Lavrov on the defensive. Lavrov said the situation in Sri Lanka is a humanitarian disaster, but not a threat to peace and security. He said other fora in the UN were better suited to address this issue. He added that there were plenty of similar instances when the Security Council did not act. China said that the Security Council's informal meetings on Sri Lanka had made a difference. Ambassador Rice disagreed, and said the meetings had not yet made a difference; displaced persons were not receiving help, and the shelling continued despite government assurances to the contrary. On the margins of the meeting, the French said they intend to bring Sri Lanka to the Security Council this week, and would push for a product.  
Rice